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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 002586

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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH SRI LANKA FM
ROHITHA BOGOLLAGAMA

Classified By: Deputy Secretary Negroponte, reasons 1.4 c, d

¶1. (C) Summary: The government of Sri Lanka (GSL) is committed to the political agenda of devolution, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama and Defense Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa told Deputy Secretary Negroponte in a July 31 meeting on the sidelines of ASEAN. The FM emphasized Sri Lanka's intention to encourage a pluralist democratic government in the North, reviewed the military's recent successes in the East, and committed to reducing civilian casualties in the conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The FM expressed hope that the joint U.S.-Sri Lankan military exercises that were postponed last year would proceed this year, and raised concerns about the delay in the delivery of Bushmaster guns and ammunition. He also asked the Deputy Secretary to look into the possibility of another assessment of Sri Lanka's eligibility for Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) funds. Finally, the FM emphasized that money collected by the LTTE from the Tamil Diaspora in the U.S. is allowing LTTE-sponsored violence to continue, and highlighted Sri Lanka's commitment to human rights. End Summary.

Committed to Political Agenda

¶2. (C) The government of Sri Lanka (GSL) is "totally committed" to the political agenda of devolution, and will start with the proposals put forth by the All-Party Representative Committee (APRC), Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama told Deputy Secretary Negroponte in a July 31 meeting on the sidelines of ASEAN. The GSL is working to bring moderates and opposition members into the government, he emphasized, stating that "we want to encourage a pluralist, democratic environment in the North, and hope the LTTE is involved in the process."

¶3. (C) Reviewing the GSL's recent military successes in the East, the Foreign Minister explained that the region had been liberated from the hold of the LTTE. Describing the situation there as post-conflict, he noted that the government hopes to showcase this area, particularly to the Co-Chairs, to gain international assistance for livelihood and infrastructure projects. "We want people to benefit from the clearance of the LTTE," he emphasized.

¶4. (C) Violence between the government and LTTE has declined compared to last year, Bogollagama stated, adding that the GSL has been able to mitigate the effects of violence through security measures. Still, the LTTE deliberately draws attention to issues such as human rights or other issues of concern to the international community in

order to detract attention from their own activities. When the attention of the international community is deflected onto the government, the LTTE is able to effectively "take a breather," and regroup.

Military Cooperation and Surveillance Equipment

15. (C) Highlighting a reduction in civilian casualties as "the one thing to improve," Sri Lankan Secretary of Defense Gotabaya Rajapaksa requested U.S. law enforcement assistance to address civilian-military issues and improve communication. The GSL has taken measures to reduce civilian casualties in the fight against the LTTE, he stated.

16. (C) Reiterating Sri Lanka's desire for enhanced maritime and ground surveillance capabilities, Rajapaksa also raised concerns about the "delay" in the delivery of Bushmaster naval guns and ammunition. He explained that the delay was not based on legal restrictions due to the country's internal political situation, but because of the need to ship the guns through a "staging point" such as Kuwait. Expressing appreciation for the long-standing military training program between the U.S. and Sri Lanka, Rajapaksa noted that the joint military exercises scheduled last year had been postponed. "We hope the exercises take place this year," he said.

Millennium Challenge Account

17. (C) Arguing that the "goalposts have shifted" in the threshold requirements for Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) disbursement, Foreign Minister Bogollagama asked the Deputy

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Secretary to look into Sri Lanka's qualification for MCA

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funds. Emphasizing that he had repeatedly raised concerns with U.S. interlocutors, the FM asked for another assessment of Sri Lanka's eligibility for the MCA before a final decision. Noting that the MCA funds would be used for development, he requested that the U.S. consider the Sri Lankan people and "not submit need-based judgments to various other considerations." The Deputy Secretary stated he would look into the matter.

Money from the U.S. Keeps the LTTE Operating

18. (C) Money collected by the LTTE among the Tamil Diaspora in the U.S. is allowing LTTE-sponsored violence to continue, FM Bogollagama emphasized. "We want to de-escalate the violence so that the political agenda gets out," but money raised in Europe, Canada and the U.S. is used to purchase arms and "hit us at home," he stated. Without the sources of foreign funds, the LTTE would be isolated among its own community because of the civilian casualties they inflict, he argued. He explained that the GSL would continue to raise this issue "because we want our position to be clear."

19. (C) Defense Secretary Rajapaksa clarified that the Tamil Diaspora has been funding the LTTE not because of radicalism, but because of a desire to make financial contributions to their homeland. The Diaspora thinks the money they send goes to the Tamil community, but in reality it goes for purchasing weapons, he said.

Committed to Human Rights

110. (C) Sri Lanka seeks to be transparent regarding human rights issues and the detention and prosecution of terrorists, FM Bogollagama stated. "We want to be transparent and to see law enforcement authorities

consciously following human rights norms and be more educated toward civilians." He also noted that the GSL remained committed to conducting human rights training at every level of the military hierarchy. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been providing assistance for human rights training at the field level, he said.

¶11. (C) Linguistic differences between military personnel and the Sri Lankan communities in which they work pose a challenge, he said, comparing the situation to U.S. military personnel working in Iraq. The GSL is making an effort to have officers speak the language of the people they come into contact with.

¶12. (U) July 31, 2007; 1615; Manila, Philippines.

¶13. (U) Meeting Participants:

U.S.
Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte
Kaye Lee, Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of State
Siriana Nair, Notetaker
Adam Scarlatelli, Notetaker

Sri Lanka
Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama
W M Senevirathna, Ambassador to the Philippines
Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Secretary of Defense
Donald Perera, Chief of Defense Staff
Dhakshitha Bogollagama, Notetaker
KENNEY